

REMARKS

Applicant submits this Reply to the Office Action mailed January 17, 2008. By this Reply, Applicant has amended claims 1 and 18 and canceled claims 2 and 3 without prejudice and disclaimer. Accordingly, claims 1, 5, 6, 18-29 and 32-42 are pending in this application. The originally-filed application fully supports the subject matter of amended claims 1 and 18. Thus, the Reply introduces no new matter.

As an initial matter, Applicant thanks the Examiner for allowing claims 27-29 and 32-42. Applicant also thanks the Examiner for indicating allowable subject matter in claims 3 and 18-26.

In the Office Action, claims 1, 5, and 6 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by German Patent DE 4405472 ("DE '472"); and claim 2 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over DE '472 in view of U.S. Patent No. 3,997,017 to Campbell et al. ("Campbell"), U.S. Patent No. 3,788,075 to Holdeman et al. ("Holdeman"), and U.S. Patent No. 3,458,005 to Malm et al. ("Malm"). Applicant respectfully traverses these rejections for the reasons provided below.

Applicant has amended independent claim 1 to include subject matter of allowable claim 3, now canceled. Accordingly, claim 1 and its dependent claims 5 and 6 are allowable over the cited references. Withdrawal of the 35 U.S.C. 102(b) rejection is respectfully requested.

The Office Action indicated that claims 18-26 would be allowable "if rewritten to overcome the rejection(s) under 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph, set forth in this Office action." Office Action at 4. However, the Office Action does not include a Section 112, second paragraph rejection. In addition, Applicant has amended claim 18 to be an independent claim and to include subject matter from its previous base claim

(claim 1) and all intervening claims (claim 2). Accordingly, as indicated in the Office Action, independent claim 18 and its dependent claims 19-26 are allowable.

The Office Action contains characterizations of the claims and the related art with which Applicant does not necessarily agree. Unless expressly noted otherwise, Applicant declines to subscribe to any statement or characterization in the Office Action.

In discussing the specification, claims, and drawings in this Reply, it is to be understood that Applicant is in no way intending to limit the scope of the claims to any exemplary embodiments described in the specification or abstract and/or shown in the drawings. Rather, Applicant is entitled to have the claims interpreted broadly, to the maximum extent permitted by statute, regulation, and applicable case law.

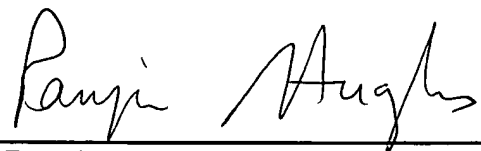
In view of the foregoing, Applicant submits that the claimed invention is neither anticipated nor rendered obvious in view of the prior art references cited against this application. Applicant therefore requests the Examiner's reconsideration and reexamination of the application and the timely allowance of the pending claims.

Please grant any extensions of time required to enter this response and charge any additional required fees to our Deposit Account No. 06-0916.

Respectfully submitted,

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Dated: April 16, 2008

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